

VIOLATIONS REVEALED IN ACTIVITIES OF
SOVIET STAMP COLLECTORS

Following is a translation of an article by
A. Andriyevich entitled "That's Not the One"
in the Russian-language newspaper Sovetskaya
Belorussia (Soviet Belorussia), Minsk, 3 June
1964, page 3.

This old Russian saying unwittingly comes to mind when one sees
what good human enthusiasm sometimes becomes.

The Central Book Store in Minsk. Near the cash registers, at the
counters, close to the stands, and in the corners groups of youths cluster
in the company of people who are far from school age. With a mysterious
air they show something to each other, examine something, and talk with
animation. And here and there is heard the ring of coins, the rustling
of papers.

What kind of strange underground buying and selling is going on
here, in the vicinity of the books?

Let us look more closely. A tall fellow about 20 years old is
standing there at the showcase with publications on atheistic topics. In
front of him, evidently, is a third-grade student. In the hands of each
one are opened tablets. What is in them? Stamps. Ordinary postage
stamps. Everything is clear. Stamp collectors!

But are they stamp collectors? Hear how ardently the adult tries
to persuade the youth to buy a stamp from him.

The youth, obviously confused by the price, tries to refuse it, say-
ing that he thinks it should be cheaper.

"Take it while you can," the 20-year old rudely interrupts.

There is a smell of trickery here. Someone decided to make a
living by speculating on the human inclination for collecting. Obviously
heating up passions, such businessmen sell ordinary postage stamps at an
exorbitant price without a twinge of conscience. They defraud stamp
collectors who trust them. This is how a noble venture becomes debased.

People have many interesting and sometimes rare passions. Some
collect unique coins, others collect post cards, and still others collect
match boxes. All these are collected persistently, over a long period of
time. As a result, valuable collections appear. Properly collected,
they are of some interest. Our youth and children are becoming attracted
to collecting along with elderly persons.

Postage stamps in particular can be collected now. Those who fol-
low this useful and interesting practice are called philatelists. Com-
piling strictly on a scientific basis the richer collections of stamps,

they help to learn much which is new and interesting not only from life in the Soviet Union but from many other countries of the world, from all continents of the earth.

The number of stamp collectors is increasing each year. Special stamp-collecting societies, clubs, and circles are even being created. They are helping the novices greatly with methodical advice and practical deeds. People of various professions and ages gather together and talk with one another about the stamps, their new series, and new postal blocks and catalogues.

Certain people try to use this enthusiasm for their narrow-minded, speculation purposes. Youths and school children very often become the victims of their dirty inclinations.

The spirit of grabbing, engendered by the unhealthy process of buying and selling, penetrates and contaminates the young souls.

Unfortunately, adults who are sometimes grey with age serve as a bad example for the children. They set up their own "second-hand markets" which are visited by the new stamp collectors. An honest exchange of the necessary stamps is often subordinated here to the principle of "who will snatch from whom."

Moreover, such businessmen from the philately do not limit themselves to ordinary exchange. Their scope is broader. They stuff envelopes with scores and hundreds of Soviet postage stamps and they then send them to various countries of the world. They thereby grossly violate our customs laws and postal regulations and cause a certain loss to our country.

Here are the facts. Violating the existing postal procedures, the Minsk stamp collector I. Drapkin continued to send abroad stamps of the Soviet Union even after a talk with official customs representatives. He did not heed their good advice. And he was a member of the city club of philatelists.

The Drapkin case leads to sad thoughts. Apparently the Minsk city club of collectors is doing little to clarify broadly to philatelists the regulations for exchange or to protect the true enthusiasts from the businessmen and rascals who are working in their field. The pernicious consequences of engaging in the contraband speculation in stamps on the part of Citizen K. Eysmontas did not serve as a warning for them. The court which was convened in Vil'nyus and about which our press has reported sentenced this "philatelist" to confinement.

It is no secret that the Soviet postage stamps are the best in the world. There is a great demand for them abroad. Certain "philatelists" from foreign countries have taken advantage of this fact. Coming to the Soviet Union for various business, they acquire large amounts of USSR postage stamps and try to take them back across the border. Of course! An outstanding business can be done with them.

Our enemies seek any means of weakening the socialist camp economically and politically. For this they are using such seemingly harmless channels as philately. With the help of philatelic ties, our ideological enemies are trying to activate correspondence with Soviet people and to secure addresses for them. They apparently feel that along with the stamps and letters they will succeed in sowing anti-Soviet seeds and dropping them in the souls of our people. Thus, Mr. Short, a member of the US House of Representatives, in calling for issuance in the US of an anniversary Shevchenko stamp, maintained that its issuance in the same series with a stamp on which is portrayed the not unknown Finnish Marshal Mannerheim would undoubtedly serve the "cold war." In his opinion, all this would be an "important foreign policy step in the battles of the cold war for the souls and hearts of the peoples."

The attempt to use philately as a means in the "cold war" must be detected. We must protect the true philatelists from the pernicious influence of bourgeois ideology and from various types of businessmen and rascals.

It is time to analyze seriously the work of the clubs of collectors which have opened both under the Palace of Culture of Trade Unions and under the Palace of Pioneers. Even in the Public Education Department of the Minsk City Executive Committee they do not know why certain school children avoid attending circles of philatelists of the Palace of Pioneers but prefer to leave their lessons and trade in stamps at the Central Book Store. F. A. Fel'dberg, head of a circle under the Palace of Pioneers, complains that the city club does not help in the work of the circle and that experienced philatelists come as guests of the children only to exchange their stamps in a profitable way.

In short, the philatelists have many unresolved problems. They need firm help. We must resolutely oppose spontaneity in such a fascinating work as stamp collecting, and we must oppose businessmen from the philately. In this way, we will protect the interests of honest philatelists and we will close the road to acquisition and commerce.